DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 061 633 24 EA 004 238

AUTHOR	Crain, Robert L.; And Others
TITLE	Causes and Effects of School Board Recruitment Patterns. Final Report. Revised.
INSTITUTION	Johns Hopkins Univ., Baltimore, Md. Dept. of Social Relations.
SPONS AGENCY	National Center for Educational Research and Development (DHEW/OE), Washington, D.C.
BUREAU NO	BR-9-C-062
PUB DATE	Feb 72
GRANT	OEG-3-70-006(010)
NOTE	29p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Administrative Personnel; Black Community; Board Administrator Relationship; Board Candidates; *Board of Education Policy; Board of Education Role; Boards of Education; Conflict Resolution; Educational Research; Elections; *Negro Leadership; *Political Influences; Politics; *Recruitment; *School Integration; Superintendents
IDENTIFIERS	Appointive Positions; Elected Positions

ABSTRACT

This project is a study of school board selection processes in 93 northern cities using the NORC "Permanent Community Sample." This report is concerned with the effects of the appointment of school board members as opposed to electing them either in competitive or noncompetitive elections. In general, researchers found that appointed school boards are heavily represented in northeastern United States, tend to have a more black representation, are more likely to be nonpolitical members of the local elite, are more concerned with school policy and more active in the schools, tend to have more conflict with their superintendents, and are less active in lobbying with other political officials for school support. In addition, appointed school boards are more likely to be desegregated in large cities with large black populations, elected school boards more likely to be desegregated in small cities with small black populations, and appointed school board members seem more realistic in their perception of the difficulty of improving schools and the necessity for learning to live with conflict about school affairs. Also included is a discussion of why elected school boards are more likely to desegregate in small cities and appointed school boards are more likely to desegregate in large cities. (Author)

ED 061633

OE-NCERD
EA
Project 9-C-062

Final Report

Project No. 9-C-062
Grant No. OEG-3-70-006 (010)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF SCHOOL BOARD RECRUITMENT PATTERNS

Robert L. Crain
Henry J. Becker
Robert T. Harris
David J. Kirby
Laura L. Morlock

The Johns Hopkins University
Department of Social Relations

Baltimore, Maryland

October 1971
Revised February 1972

The research reported herein was performed pursuant to a grant with the Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Contractors undertaking such projects under Government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their professional judgment in the conduct of the project. Points of view or opinions stated do not, therefore, necessarily represent official Office of Education position or policy.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

Office of Education
Educational Research, Region III

EA 004 238

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
METHOD	2
RESULTS	7
The Differences Between Appointed and Elected School Boards	7
The Social Factors Influencing the City's Method of Selection	9
The Consequences of School Board Selection; the Kind of Board Member Who is Appointed and the Kind Who is Elected	12
The Effects of School Board Selection: The Operation of the Board	16
School Board Ideology and School Board Policy	17
SUMMARY	27

INTRODUCTION

This grant was used to fund the middle phase of one portion of a larger project. The larger project, began in 1967 and to be completed by the end of 1972, is an analysis of the politics of public education in northern cities focusing upon school desegregation decisions. That project deals with a whole range of questions; the way in which the school system deals with the civil rights movement, how it makes decisions about school matters, the role of the superintendent, and the relationship of all this to the general structure of the city's political systems. This particular project deals with one portion of that larger study: the way in which school board members are selected and the kinds of school boards which result from different selection processes. We refer to the last year and one-half as the middle stage of this project. During the period 1967 through 1970 data was being collected and some of the preliminary coding was done. Beginning in 1970 coding, construction of final variables, and a large section of the analysis were completed. In the next year we anticipate that the final analysis will be completed and material prepared for publication.

A study dealing with the politics of education should be interesting to the student of education and to the student of politics. Ideally it should also be of value to the practitioner of either politics or education.

The project is of considerable general interest to educational researchers. Almost no research has been done on the way in which school board members attain their office and there has not been much dealing with the way in which the kinds of school board selection procedures affect the policies of the board. Thus we are breaking new ground in much of our analysis.

For the political scientist the topic is also quite interesting. School board members are a highly specialized type of politician. They are the least partisan. While studies have been made of the recruitment of congressmen, for example, relatively few studies have been made of recruitment to local political office.

For the policy maker, the implications of our research are more problematic, as in any political study the variables being considered are not the kind which can be easily changed by persons interested in changing the system. To say that a school board in City X is the way it is because the political parties are too strong, or the working class voters underrepresented, does not help because no one interested in change has the power to alter the political scheme of things. There is one exception to that general rule. The question of whether the school board should be elected or appointed is important because this change can be made by policy makers by simply passing legislation. Thus in our reports to date we have focused quite heavily on this particular question.

METHOD

The larger project represents an application of the methodology of survey research to studies of cities. Traditionally, studies of school systems or city governments were based heavily on the case study method; an investigator spent a number of months learning, in great detail, the workings of the particular school system and then wrote an analysis of why it operated the way it did. This is not a very productive technique. Very often we hear someone's comments on his hometown and realize that the speaker is ignorant of the differences between his city and others. The only kinds of statements that a social scientist can make are comparative ones: educational levels are higher in the north than in the south, children of middle class families do better in school than do children of lower class families. We can not study a single child and say that he is doing poorly or doing well except to measure him against the standard of the other children in his classroom or in the world. Thus the standardized achievement test is important because it is standardized and can be administered to large numbers of students. It is the same with cities, school systems, and school boards. We can only talk about one school board by comparing it to another.

During the second world war the methodology of survey research began to be applied to social problems. Survey research represented a change in methodological orientation of social scientists which was of considerable importance. The assumption behind survey research was that if large numbers of people, genuinely representative of the population we are interested in could be contacted, even the most mundane and superficial information could be analyzed to reveal important things about the structure of their society. The technique is now commonplace and the assumptions go unspoken in everyday scientific discourse.

In 1966 a group of us, then at the National Opinion Research Center of the University of Chicago, conceived of the idea of applying these sam assumptions to the study of cities. Rather than studying in detail a single city and being unable to compare it to others, we shose to gather more or less superficial information about a large number of cities in order to carry out the same kind of statistical analysis that is normally used in survey research. That year the National Opinion Research Center drew the "Permanent Community Sample;" a sample of 200 American cities, including virtually every city over 150,000 population and with a sampling of cities down to population 50,000. The sampling was proportional to size so that two thirds of all the cities of 100,000 population fell into the sample but only one third of those with population 50,000. The basic logic would be that survey research interviewers (although somewhat more sophisticated and highly trained than the usual interviewer) would interview community leaders using

a standard questionnaire instrument to provide data on each of those cities. In the case of the school desegregation study a sub-sample of 91 cities were selected. These were cities located in the north with over 3,000 blacks in 1960 and excluded two cities where we expected to have serious problems of access.

For the purposes of this research "non-southern" includes all cities in the West, North Central, and Northeast census regions (excluding Alaska, Hawaii, and territorial possessions) as defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, and those cities in the South census region which desegregated their public school systems immediately after the 1954 Brown decision by the U.S. Supreme Court. That is, those southern cities which ceased maintaining de jure segregated school systems immediately after the the Brown decision are treated here as "non-southern."

Because the research was concerned primarily with school desegregation and the political activity surrounding this phenomenon, the sample was limited to those cities from the Permanent Community Sample where there was some probability of the issue of school desegregation arising, namely cities with a black population large enough to have one or more segregated schools. It was estimated that the minimum number of blacks in a population needed to produce at least one segregated elementary school in a city was 3,000. Consequently, the additional restriction that each city have a black population of at least 3,000 was placed on the sample.

Excluding those northern cities in the Permanent Community Sample which had fewer than 3,000 blacks meant that sixty-one cities were eliminated, each having a population of 250,000 or less. Fifty-seven of these sixty-one cities had a population of 150,000 or less; sixteen ranged in population from 75,000 to 99,999; and thirty-one ranged from 50,000 to 74,999. Moreover, twenty-two (35 per cent) were "central cities" and forty-one (65 per cent) were "suburban" communities. A city was considered "suburban" if it was located within thirty-five miles of another city with a population two or more times as large. The largest city in an area was considered the "central city." The net effect, therefore, of applying the racial composition criterion to the Permanent Community Sample was to eliminate many smaller and suburban communities. Thirty-seven (61.6 per cent) of the cities eliminated for the aforementioned reason were suburbs of one of the thirteen largest cities in the northern United States. However, sixteen cities in the final sample of ninety-one (17.6 per cent) were also suburbs of these same thirteen cities. Therefore, while the number of northern suburban cities was reduced by limiting the sample to those cities with more than 3,000 blacks, such cities were by no means completely eliminated.

In summary, 60 per cent of all northern cities in the Permanent Community Sample, and 37 per cent of all northern cities in the entire United States are included in our final sample. This represents 77.6 per cent of the total population of northern cities in the Permanent Community Sample. While they are neither a randomly selected nor statistically representative sample of all northern U.S. cities, these ninety-one cities do represent the universe of all northern U.S. cities with a population of 250,000 or more, and they are a fairly representative sample of all northern cities of 50,000 or more which contain at least 3,000 Negroes. Although suburban communities are slightly under-represented, it is not in any way evident that the final sample otherwise differs radically from any stratified random sample of all northern U.S. cities that might be drawn. Therefore, we consider these ninety-one cities to be a representative sample of "big cities" in the northern United States.

Within each of the sample cities, National Opinion Research Center interviewers conducted a series of eighteen interviews. These included interviews with persons in the following positions:

1. City editor of a major local newspaper
2. 1955 school board member
3. Mayor or his administrative assistant
4. Political leader of the party opposite the Mayor
5. A major civic leader in the community
6. An informed civil rights leader in the community
7. Superintendent of schools
8. PTA president
9. A "moderate" civil rights leader knowledgeable about city schools in 1963
10. A "moderate" civil rights leader knowledgeable about city schools in 1968
11. A "militant" civil rights leader
12. A black politician
13. A black businessman
14. A current member of the school board who is black
15. A current member of the school board who is knowledgeable about the desegregation issues in the city
16. A current school board member who is knowledgeable about school board elections or appointments
17. A current school board member who is knowledgeable about city school finances
18. A member of the school superintendent's staff

An additional self-administered questionnaire was completed by a member of a local newspaper staff whose area of special interest or assignment was education or schools, bringing the total number of different questionnaires administered to nineteen. Respondents did

not receive the same questionnaire or questions, although some questions were common to all interviews. In essence, the project proposed to interview a city, and the interview was divided among nineteen different parts of that city.

Respondents were interviewed in three "waves," with each wave supplying information and names used in formulating questions and identifying respondents for the next. The first wave consisted of the education reporter questionnaire and provided general description of and information about the major school desegregation issues in the city, the actors involved in these issues, the characteristics of the city's political system, and the characteristics of the school system and administration. The second wave of interviews (No. 1-6) dealt with such factors as the most important problems and controversies facing the city since 1960 (not necessarily with regard to race or school desegregation); the people most influencial in the city and in the resolution of the city's problems; a recent mayoral election; changes in the characteristics and style of school board operation and recruitment since 1955; information on civic leaders and organizations; and the identification of and information about the local civil rights movement, organizations, and leaders. Respondents in the third and final wave (No. 7-18) were questioned in greater detail about the response of the school system, civil rights organizations, the political system, and the general public to the city's major school desegregation issue or demand; the recruitment of school board members; the recruitment, political behavior, and career of the Superintendent of Schools; the general financial backing given the school system in terms of budgetary, tax and bond support by the political system, civic elite, and the general public: the recruitment practices of civil rights organizations; the attitudes and ideologies of civil rights leaders (leaders in the black community); and school system statistical data.

The education reporters received their questionnaires by mail in November of 1967. Upon their completion, and after a preliminary analysis and the extraction of material to be used in succeeding interviews, the second wave of questionnaires was administered beginning in April of 1968. The third wave began in July, 1968 and continued through May of 1969. The education reporter and superintendent of schools were the most difficult interviews to obtain, but even in these two cases, 85 per cent of the questionnaires were completed. This excellent response rate is partially due to the fact that each questionnaire could be answered by any one of several persons in a city. While the research is, in the abstract, a sample survey, there are important differences between a survey of individuals and a survey of cities, which influenced the design of this study. Since information must come from a number of different sources in each community, the "questionnaire" was written in such a way as to make optimal use of the variety of sources. We were primarily interested

in procuring information about a city and its decision-making process, and assumed that any one of several civic leaders or civil rights leaders, for example, could provide us with the necessary information. Consequently, the interviewers were provided with the names of several potential respondents for each questionnaire, and if the first choice could not or would not cooperate, we attempted to interview the second choice. In most cases, our first choice did cooperate, but the important fact is that we were treating the interviewees as informants rather than respondents. Therefore, no one person was crucial to our design, and no one person's refusal to cooperate was very damaging.

The analysis follows the general scheme of survey research analysis. Questionnaire responses from different informants were correlated against each other, if there was agreement between two respondents the two items were combined with others to build scales. For example, if one respondent reported that the political parties were influential in selecting school board candidates and another informant reported that political party membership was an important factor in being selected to the school board, we assumed that both of these items reflected a general characteristic of the city -- namely, that parties were important and selected people from their own ranks in filling school board vacancies. These items and others from other questionnaires were combined to build scales. The requirement of scaling is, of course, that different respondents agree with each other if, for example, the mayor stated that political parties were important in certain cases, we would look at the answer to the same question by his opponent in the opposite political party. If the two answers did not occur together in the same cities we assume that either the question was unanswerable or that the informants were uninformed and begin looking for additional information.

Of the nineteen informants the most important for this section of the study were the four school board members themselves. But in addition the mayor, the PTA president, the retired school board member and the civil rights leaders were also used to add to the store of information. They were asked detailed questions about what we considered the three most important aspects of the study: 1) the political characteristics of the city; 2) the extent to which different kinds of community groups were involved in selection of school board members; 3) personal characteristics and attitudes of individual school board members; and 4) descriptions of the way in which the school board behaved as a group.

RESULTS

The Differences Between Appointed and Elected School Boards

For many years American cities have attempted to solve their governmental problems with a reform of the charter changing the procedure for selecting its top officials. This pattern reached its peak at the turn of the century when the progressive movement led to the invention of city manager-council and commission forms of government, and many cities created a central city-wide school board appointed by the mayor.

No careful evaluation has even been made of the effects of having an appointed rather than elected board. This study permits us to develop some answers to the question of which form is better. Among the 89 school boards for which we have data, there are 21 elected boards. In almost all of these cases the board members are selected by the mayor, sometimes with approval of the city council. Of the remaining 68 cities, only 43 have competitive elections, where the candidates for the board are opposed in election campaigns. In the remaining 25 cities elections are non-competitive: either only one candidate runs for office or only one candidate has a reasonable chance of election. These 25 boards represent a sort of middle ground between the competitively elected boards and the appointed ones. The 9 competitively elected boards are in effect appointed by the nominating committee which selects the candidates. On the other hand they must stand for reelection and know this while they are in office. Therefore we would expect these boards to show some of the characteristics of elected boards and some of the characteristics of appointed ones.

We were particularly interested in the effects of appointment and election in the large heterogeneous cities where education has become a critical social issue. In order to use the most powerful procedure for analyzing the small number of large cities we grouped 14 of the largest and most heterogeneous cities into 7 matched pairs of cities.

The 7 pairings are shown in Table 1. Thus for example Baltimore, an appointed board, is compared to St. Louis which has an elected board. The statistics presented in the 6 columns to the right indicate that Baltimore is slightly larger than St. Louis, has a larger number of blacks, but does not have a larger per cent of its population who are of foreign stock.* The pairings were made on the basis of size, percentage black, and where possible, region within the United States. From looking at all 7 pairs we see that the elected school boards are smaller than the appointed boards in 6 of the 7 comparisons; there are almost no differences in the percentage black but usually the appointed board city has a larger percentage of foreign stock. The explanation for this seems to be that the northeast has adopted appointed school boards much more frequently than has the midwest; therefore comparison of appointed versus elected boards to some extent would reflect the difference between the east coast and midwest and far west.

---

* all data from the 1960 Census of Population.

TABLE 1

The Pairings of Cities

The Cities		Population (100's)		%black, 1960		% foreign stock, 1960	
appointed	elected	A	E	A	E	A	E
Baltimore	St. Louis	939	750	34.7	28.6	15	14
Buffalo	Milwaukee	533	741	13.3	8.4	35	30
Chicago	Cleveland	3,550	876	23.0	28.6	36	31
N. York City	Los Angeles	7,782	2,479	14.0	13.5	48	33
Philadelphia	Detroit	2,003	1,670	26.4	28.9	50	32
Pittsburgh	Cincinnati	604	503	16.7	21.6	30	12
San Francisco	San Diego	740	573	10.0	6.0	44	22

The Social Factors Influencing the City's Method of Selection

The political and social factors which may cause some school systems to have appointed boards while others have elected boards are indicated in Tables 2, 3 and 4, for the entire sample. In Table 2 we see that large cities are as likely to have appointed school boards as are medium-size cities. The main difference in the table lies in the fact that medium size cities are more likely to have elected school boards where elections are in fact non-competitive. Apparently in smaller cities it is simply more difficult to put together the interest group or voting black which would provide an electoral base for a rival candidate.

In some cities city council members run for election with the label of their political party shown on the ballot. Other cities' elections are non-partisan (in principal if not in fact). Table 3 indicates that cities where councilmen are elected in partisan elections are more likely to have appointed school boards. It is not possible to be sure of the causal relationship here, and there are two likely explanations for this pattern. The first is that partisan elections are heavily concentrated in the northeastern part of the United States and this is precisely the area where appointed school boards are also common. A second, more subtle, explanation is that school boards were placed under an appointment process in precisely those cities where elected school boards would be most immersed in partisan politics. Parties benefit from having their name on the ballot -- and the stronger the parties, the greater the need for an appointment process to insulate the school board from a party-dominated election.

Table 3 also shows that the school boards where elections are not competitive tend to be boards in cities where city council elections are non-partisan. It seems likely that cities with partisan elections will tend to have competitively elected school boards for the simple reason that both local political parties will induce candidates to run for office even if school board elections are themselves non-partisan. It may also be that non-competitive elections may be a characteristic of the midwest where many of the non-partisan boards are located.

Table 2 shows that cities where elections for school board are non-competitive tend to be smaller cities.

Regional differences in type of board selection are shown in Table 4. Half (52%) of the northeastern school boards have appointed boards while only 1 in 9 (11%) of the northeastern school boards have non-competitive elections for school boards. The midwest and farwest are quite different. Only 1 school board in 8 is appointed in either region and nearly a third of the boards are selected by non-competitive elections.

Below Table 4 is a note describing the results among the 7 matched pairs of large cities. Again the appointed boards are heavily concentrated

TABLE 2

Type of Board Selection, by Size of City

	Large Cities (over 175,000)	Median-Size Cities (50-175,000)
Appointed	25%	23%
Elected:		
Competitive	58%	42%
Non-competitive	17%	36%
Total	100%	101%
N	(36)	(53)

TABLE 3

Type of Board Selection, by Partisanship of Local Elections:

	Non-Partisan	Partisan
Appointed	10%	43%
Elected		
Competitive	50%	46%
Non-competitive	40%	11%
Total	100%	100%
N	(52)	(37)

TABLE 4

Type of Board Selection, By Region

	Northeast	Midwest	Far West
Appointed	52%	12%	11%
Elected:			
Competitive	37%	52%	54%
Non-competitive	11%	36%	35%
Total	100%	100%	100%
N	(27)	(50)	(62)

7 matched comparisons among large cities:

5 appointed boards are Northeastern, 1 Midwest and 1 West, compared to no elected boards in Northeast, 5 in Midwest and 2 in Far West.

in the northeast. Only one of the large city elected boards (Cincinnati) had non-competitive elections at the time of our study. A second city (St. Louis) changed from a competitive to a non-competitive electoral pattern while we were studying it. All of this means that we must interpret differences between appointed and elected boards carefully, bearing in mind that we may in fact be discovering not differences due to the selection procedure, but differences due to region. In particular northeastern community leaders tend to be more progressive than those in the midwest. *

The Consequences of School Board Selection; the Kind of Board Member Who is Appointed and the Kind Who is Elected.

Tables 5, 6 and 7 compare appointed and elected school boards in terms of the type of man selected for office. The proponents of school board appointment have traditionally argued that an appointment procedure would permit the school board to be staffed with the kind of "good" men who would not submit their name to an election campaign. The proponents of elected school boards have argued that elected boards are more democratic and less elitist. It also seems reasonable that appointed school boards may have members who could not be elected in competitive elections.

Table 5 indicates that blacks are more likely to be appointed than elected when the black population in the city is small. The table indicates the number of blacks on different types of boards and in cities where the percentage black is large (over 20%) and where it is small (under 20%). Looking at the top half of the table, where the percentage black is large, we see relatively few differences between the three types of boards. There are only 2 cities where blacks make up less than 10% of the board although they constitute over 20% of the city population. Both of these cities have non-competitive elected boards. Apparently the uncontested election system may result in a board dominated by whites. Both competitive elections and appointment result in a larger number of blacks on the school board; there is a slight tendency for appointed boards to have the largest number.

When we look at the bottom half of the table where the black electorate is small, we see quite striking differences. In over half the cities with competitive elections, blacks make up less than 10% of the board. (In almost all the cases this means that there are no blacks at all on the board.) In contrast the six of these seven appointed boards have at least 10% of their membership made up of blacks. This would seem to indicate that the appointment process favors the appointment of blacks in cities where the black electorate is not large enough to have an impact. However when the black electorate becomes large the board

---

* Unpublished tabulations by Peter H. Rossi and Robert L. Crain.

TABLE 5

Per Cent of Board Members Who are Black,

by Selection of Board and Racial

Composition of City

Per Cent Black in City	Per Cent Black on Board	(% of Board Members Black) Selection: Appointed	Elected Non-Competitive	Elected Competitive
Over 20%	10%	0	25	0
	10-19%	29	62	43
	20%+	71	12	57
	Total	100	99	99
	N	(14)	(8)	(14)
Under 20%	10%	14	41	61
	10-19%	71	53	25
	20%+	14	5	14
	Total	99	99	100
	N	(7)	(17)	(28)

7 matched comparisons among large cities:

4 appointed boards have more blacks,

3 elected boards have more blacks.

TABLE 6

Board Member's Income by Type of Board Selection and Size of City

	% with incomes over $30,00 per year	
	Medium-Size Cities	Large Cities
Appointed	56 (44)	72 (40)
Elected		
Competitive	45 (85)	54 (84)
Non-competitive	40 (76)	72 (24)
Total		
N		

In 6 comparisons among large cities, five appointed boards have higher incomes. The one elected board with a higher income is a non-competitive board.

selection procedure tends to make little difference. This is reflected in the data on the seven pairs of large cities, where there are essentially no differences between appointed and elected boards.

When several measures of the board members socio-economic status are used we see almost no differences. Board members in appointed cities are not better educated and do not have more prestigous occupations. All board members in all cities tend to be heavily drawn from the college graduate professionals and managerial class. However, we do see in Table 6 that the appointed board members tend to have higher incomes than the board members in competitively elected cities. For example of the forty-four men whom we interviewed who served on appointed school boards in medium size cities, 56% have incomes over $30,000 per year, a higher fraction than for either competitively or non-competitively elected boards. In large cities appointed board members are more likely to have higher incomes than board members in competitively elected cities. When we turn to the 14 large cities in the sample we find that in 5 cases out of 6 for which we have data, the appointed boards have the highest incomes. The one exception to the general rule is in a non-competitively elected board. This seems to indicate that wealthy men have a better chance of being selected where the school board does not have competitive elections.

Finally, Table 7 shows the response to the following question addressed to all the board members, "Do you believe you might ever be interested in running for (another) elected office?" As the table indicates the vast majority of the appointed board members said no, while a thin majority of the board members in the competitively elected cities said yes. As the note at the bottom of Table 7 indicates, this same pattern appears when we study only the 14 largest cities.

In summary it seems as if appointed board members are more likely to be elitist, non-political and in cities where blacks have little chance of being elected the appointment process may greatly increase their chances of being represented on the school board.

The Effects of School Board Selection: The Operation of the Board

Tables 8, 9 and 10 present some evidence to indicate that the appointed board members are more interested and active in school affairs, although whether this is a good thing or not is not so obvious. Table 8 presents a complex pattern. Each board member was asked to comment on the amount of disagreement among board members. When the results of the four board members interviewed in the city were pooled, a measure of the cohesiveness of the school board was created. The data in Table 8 divides the city by size of city as well as by selection process. In general we see the medium size cities tend to have board members which have less disagreement and more cohesion. In medium size cities school boards selected in different ways do not seem to differ in cohesion. (There is a slight tendency for appointed boards to be more cohesive but the difference

TABLE 7

Interest in Running for Elective Office, by Board Selection

	% interested in running for elective office
appointed	11 (84)
elected	
competitive	54 (169)
non-competitive	34 (100)
Total	
N	(353)

7 matched comparisons among large cities:

2 appointed boards show same interest as elected boards in running for elective office.

5 appointed boards show less interest in running for elective office.

TABLE 8

Cohesion of Board, by Board Selection,

and City Size

	% of boards high in cohesion	
	medium cities	large cities
appointed	58 (12)	11 (9)
elected		
competitive	45 (22)	57 (21)
non-competitive	53 (19)	50 (6)
Total		
N	(53)	(36)

in 7 comparisons among large cities, 3 appointed boards are more cohesive, 4 are less cohesive.

TABLE 9

Board Involvement is School System Decision-Making

By Board Selection

	% of boards high in decision involvement
appointed	62
elected	
competitive	49
non-competitive	32

7 comparisons among large cities, 3 appointed boards show more involvement, 4 have less involvement.

TABLE 10

Board Selection by Board-Superintendent Disagreement

	% of boards with high disagreement with Superintendent
appointed	76%
elected	
competitive	47%
non-competitive	44%

In 7 comparisons among large cities, appointed boards have higher levels of disagreement with their superintendent in 5 of the cases.

is too small to be significant.) When we turn to large cities we see that in most cases the boards do not consider themselves cohesive and it is the appointed boards which seem to have the greatest amount of conflict. Looking at the 14 largest and most heterogeneous cities we find that the appointed boards are approximately as low in cohesion as are the elected boards. This is surprising because we would expect that the high income board members would tend to form a more elitist and "club-like" board. Apparently this is not the case.

Table 9 may suggest one reason why the appointed boards are not more cohesive. They indicate that boards in appointed cities are generally more involved in school board affairs. They are more likely to press the superintendent for information, to question his decisions and in general take a more aggressive role in settling school policy. Perhaps this is because the appointed board members are more likely to have the deep commitment to education. In the cases where the school board is elected it is often the case that the elected school board member is interested in running for elected office without being especially interested in education.

Table 10 shows that the higher level of decision-involvement on the part of the appointed school board tends to lead to higher levels of conflict with the superintendent. Each school board member was asked how often the board disagreed with the superintendent. When these results are averaged for each city we find that three-fourths of the appointed boards say that they have high disagreement with the superintendent compared to only one-half of the elected boards. This same pattern holds for 5 of the 7 appointed boards which are compared in the matched-sample analysis.

In summary appointed school board members are more active in school board affairs but this tends to generate more conflict with the superintendent and more internal conflict within the board. Whether the high level of activity on the part of the appointed school board members more than justifies the higher level of conflict with the superintendent depends upon one's point of view: upon how one views the role of the board, and whether one views conflict as usually good or usually bad for school systems.

School Board Ideology and School Board Policy

The last, and perhaps most important question, is what effect school board selection has upon the policies of the school system. We earlier saw that the appointed school board member was less political in his personal orientation -- he was less likely to be willing to run for office. It seems that this non-politicalness is reflected in Table 11 which indicates that members of appointed boards are less likely to work on behalf of the schools by contact local and state officials for financial and other help. The appointed boards are noticeably less likely to be active in lobbying and other political activity.

TABLE 11

Amount of Board Lobbying by Board Selection

	% of board high in political activity on behalf of schools
appointed	29%
elected	
competitive	49%
non-competitive	52%

In 7 comparisons among large cities, appointed boards are less active in 6 cases; the seventh pair is tied.

On the whole we found very few ideological differences between appointed and elected board members. For example, white board members from elected and appointed school boards do not seem to differ in their racial attitudes. One difference which does appear is a slight tendency for the blacks appointed to school boards to be more moderate in their racial views. A measure of racial liberalism built on responses to several questions about support for various kinds of moderate and militant civil rights activity shows the appointed boards to be somewhat less likely to be highly liberal or militant. (Table 12)

Tables 13 and 14 reveal important differences in the integration policies of appointed and elected school boards. School boards in both groups have adopted bussing for integration. However the pattern seems to be that the elected school boards act to integrate the schools most often in situations where integration is "easy;" the appointed school boards are more likely to act when action is "difficult." For example, Table 14 shows that 40% of the elected school boards adopted bussing in cities which have a small black population compared to only 15% of the competitive boards and 17% of the non-competitive school boards in cities where the black population is large. On the other hand appointed boards are considerably more likely to bus for integration when the black population is large. Table 13 shows a similar pattern with regard to city size. Competitively elected school boards tend to adopt bussing equally often in medium size cities and large cities. The appointed boards tend to adopt bussing in larger cities much more than they do in medium size cities. Thus when we turn to the 7 matched sample comparisons of the very large cities in the sample we find that the appointed boards are noticeably more likely to be involved in a bussing problem. (We ask various respondents in the city whether the school board had bussed to achieve integration or whether it had merely bussed to relieve overcrowding, which is usually the same thing by a more palatable name.)

One plausible explanation for this rather complex interaction effect is that the medium sized, predominantly white city and the large city with the large black population differ in their ability to articulate issues and generate debate. In the large city there are sufficient voters to permit the development of organized interest groups which can press hard for their particular positions. Thus the larger the black population, in general the more articulate and aggressive the civil rights activity in a city. Similarly the larger the city the more possible it is to organize a white liberal group to push for integration. In the small city, particularly one which is racially homogeneous it is often very difficult to organize an interest group to oppose the established community leadership. This means that there is less pressure on the mayor to appoint non-establishment school board members and in turn less pressure on the school board members to respond to the non-establishment demands. The appointed school board in the predominantly white city is a loyal captive of the conservative main-street businessmen faction which so often dominates this sort of community. In these cities an elected school board provides an opportunity for young and articulate parents to run in opposition to the establishment figures.

TABLE 12

Racial Liberalism of Black School Board Members,

by Selection of Board

Blacks Interviewed	% High Racial Liberalism
Appointed Blacks	43 (23)
Elected Blacks	
competitive	50 (7)
non-competitive	62 (3)
Total (N)	(63)

TABLE 13

Bussing for Integration, by City Size

	% of cities that bussed for integration	
	medium-size	large-size
appointed	20 (10)	50 (8)
elected		
competitive	31 (19)	31 (19)
non-competitive	31 (16)	40 (5)
Total		
N	(45)	(32)

In six large city comparisons (date is missing in one case) three appointed cities bussed for integration, compared to 1 elected city; five bussed to relieve overcrowding, compared to three elected cities.

TABLE 14

Bussing for Integration, by Blacks in City

	% of cities that bussed for integration	
	low black pop.	high black pop.
appointed	17 (6)	42 (12)
elected		
competitive	40 (25)	15 (11)
non-competitive	40 (15)	17 (6)
Total		
N	(46)	(29)

They then become a major source of innovation for the community school system. In the large cities, particularly with large black population, there is no need to generate demands and produce well articulated divisions of opinion. The problem then is how to reconcile those differences and produce action in the face of political chaos. In this case the elitist school board with ties to business may serve as a moderating force taking compromise positions and in general attempting to meet the needs of the community from a more secure position which permits them to take riskier actions. Thus in the very large cities the appointed school board is more able to respond to the demands made by the black community for desegregation. In the smaller cities the elected school board is more able to generate demands for integration and then carry them out.

This interpretation of the data suggests that there should be attitudinal differences between elected and appointed school board members which permit appointed school board members to take risky positions in the face of conflict, at least in large cities. Five questions were administered to the school board members. They were asked to agree or disagree with:

> Most students in expensive private schools don't learn any more than they would have if they had gone to public schools.
>
> If people really understood the issues, there would be no disagreement about school policy.
>
> If the long run, the average school board member doesn't really have any important effect on the quality of education in his city.
>
> It isn't possible to run a school system without bitter conflict.
>
> Many of the issues in public education are so complex that school board members can't really make wise decisions.

As Table 15 indicates the appointed board members in every case are more likely to give the least optimistic response. It seems to us that this reflects feelings on the part of the appointed board members of pessimism, inefficacy, or tolerance for uncomfortable perceptions. The appointed board member is no Pollyanna. The situation is not very good and there is not a great deal one can do about it.

This pessimism may reflect a greater cynicism on the part of the elite who serve on appointed boards. It may also reflect a greater willingness to accept and live with uncomfortable truths. In fact an objective advisor would admit that students in private schools do learn more. It seems highly unlikely that merely teaching people the facts about school policy would make it possible for them all to agree on what that policy

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

TABLE 15

Board Members' Pessimism, Inefficacy, or Conflict Tolerance

	% agreeing to items described in the text				
	private learn more	still be disagreement	bitter conflict inevitable	no long-run effect	can't decide wisely
	1	2	3	4	5
elected, competitive	45%	61%	18%	13%	19%
elected, non-competitive	44	56	17	18	22
appointed	68	70	28	26	30
N	(3)	(336)	(335)	(337)	(336)

Among the seven matched pairs of large cities, only the items "If people really understood the issues, there would be no disagreement over school policy" shows a difference. Board members in 6 appointed cities are more likely to agree to this, while only 1 elected board shows more agreement.

should be. Given the present state of racial tension in most cities it is hard to see that we will avoid bitter conflict over education in the foreseeable future. Given the Coleman Report, the lack of success of attempts to improve tested school achievement of children, and the unwieldiness of big city bureaucracies such as the school system, it does seem extremely difficult for the average school board member to have a lasting effect upon his school system. Finally, when the experts disagree and are profoundly confused as to what steps should be taken to improve the American education it would be too much to expect the average school board member to be able to make wise decisions. Thus these five questions all measured the pessimism of the school board member, but it is a pessimism which is frankly realistic. Thus we interpret these responses to indicate that the appointed school board member, speaking from his elitist background and with the security of an appointed position which he need not test before the voters, can live with the uncomfortable complexities of modern education.

In an earlier publication* we have argued that this tolerance for complexity which enables the elitist school board to act to desegregate in the face of white backlash and aggressive civil rights activity. Rather than becoming upset that his optimistic vision of the world has been shattered by the demonstrators at his doorstep, the appointed school board member sees this as only what he expected and moves to do something about it.

To put this point another way, of the 6 elected school boards in the largest cities, only one has openly attempted to bus to achieve racial balance in the schools and three had no bussing program at all. Yet it is these board members who say that "if people really understood the issues there would be no disagreement over school board policy." Do they mean that if blacks really understood the racial question in America they would not want integration?

---

* Robert L. Crain, Morton Inger, Politics of School Desegregation, NORC Monographs in Social Research, Chicago, Aldine, 1969.

SUMMARY

There are few large differences between appointed and elected boards and it is sometimes unclear whether these are genuine differences or whether they result from the fact that appointed boards are heavily concentrated in the northeastern region. The data indicate that appointed school boards are more elitist in their membership, less political in the personal orientation of its members and are more likely to have black representation in cities where blacks would not ordinarily be able to win an election. Appointed school boards are more aggressive in dealing with the school system which in turn tends to generate more conflict between board members and between the board and the superintendent. Appointed school boards tend to lobby less with other political officials for support for the schools but are more likely to act to integrate than in the larger cities. In large cities the appointed school board seems to provide a valuable function of providing a secure and somewhat insulated board which is able to make difficult decisions in the face of tense community disagreement about education. In the small cities however it seems that an appointed board may well merely be dominated by the establishment and represent only one point of view in the community.